

Listen! I will make breath enter you

so you may come to

Life

EZEKIEL 37:5

Reflection:

February 2022

Breathe in. Breathe out. Breathe in. Breathe out. How many times do we stop to examine our breath? For most of us, our breath continues without pause, taken for granted simply because it has always been there. Yet, for many in these last few years, the simple act of breathing has become a challenge, whether it be breathing with a mask on or gasping for breath because of the coronavirus. Surely, we realize that we can no longer take for granted our physical breath. What then of our life-breath, the breath of God that animates us and fills us with purpose?

Scripture begins with an account of God breathing life into Adam, the first man. We see this life-breath again in the dramatic unfolding of events when Ezekiel is asked by God to breathe life into the dry bones that has filled the valley. In this passage, there are three realities that we may identify with at various times and seasons of our lives. These three realities mirror the three prophecies that Ezekiel was asked to speak over the dry bones; essentially, to live, to breathe, and to be restored.

First, Ezekiel, following the prompting of the Lord, prophecies over the dry bones that they may have life. We can notice this experience of death in our own hearts that have suffered, grieved, or been saddened by our own sin or other's sins. Hopeless and purposeless, these become the bones that are stripped of its life, discarded, and left without a future in the proverbial dark valleys of our hearts.

Next, Ezekiel is asked to breathe the breath of God into bodies that have muscles and bones, but no breath. We may see this in our relationships or ministry, when we are going through the motions, but we lack true life and passion. We may have physical life and all the practical necessities to live but lack the animating presence of a joy filled and purpose-driven life that is promised to us as Christians. Unfortunately, most of us can identify in ourselves or others, the "burned-out" Jesus Youth leader or the tired mother or father trudging through life burdened by their many responsibilities.

As Ezekiel breathes breath and life into these dry bones, he realizes that his job has not finished. God invites him to proclaim the third prophecy, the breath of restoration and hope into the people before him. God not only desires these bodies to come to a physical life but a life that is restored & whole. His great and everlasting love for his beloved people is clear as He breathes life, breath, and restoration through the prophet Ezekiel.

The first two realities can be painful times where we dutifully move forward without a clear end in sight. But here in this passage, we are invited to see a God who is faithful and who never leaves his people. In our own lives, we can be assured that God will use many ordinary prophets to breathe new life and spirit into us. We have surely experienced this in our lives, through a timely phone call from a friend or a song that plays on the radio. These consoling interventions are reminders that God will never leave us, even in the most desolate of times and our reliance on others to become God's instruments to restore our life and purpose. Thus, the third reality is an invitation for each of us to examine our role as prophets in the lives of others. This may look like being a bearer of truth and hope in our families, our workplaces or difficult mission places. The Lord is the one that brings life, but he uses our willingness and our courage to speak truth to bring life in even the most desolate of places.

As Jesus Youth, we are likely to encounter all three realities at various stages of our lives or even certain areas of our heart. Let us examine our receptivity to the daily prophets who speak hope into our lives. Let us also examine our receptivity to the Lord and his invitation to speak truth over those who are in desperate need of new life through the Lord. Let us allow this receptivity to shape us and form us so that every breath we breathe may be the life breath of God.

Be the life breath of God.

- Jilu Chengat

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